

The stigmatizing attitudes, beliefs and actions scale*

The Stigmatizing Attitudes, Beliefs and Actions Scale (SABAS) is a tool designed to measure abortion stigma at the individual and community level. SABAS captures three important dimensions of abortion stigma: negative stereotypes about men and women who are associated with abortion, discrimination/exclusion of women who have abortions, and fear of contagion as a result of coming in contact with a woman who has had an abortion.

The tool can be used in several ways: 1) as part of a community situation assessment to help inform the content or messaging of stigma-reduction interventions; 2) as baseline and/or endline data collection in stigma-reduction intervention communities; 3) as a “pre and post-test” to measure short-term change at the individual and/or community level. SABAS is available in Spanish and we encourage researchers and program evaluation professionals to adapt the scale for their specific needs.

Developing and validating the scale

In 2011, Ipas conducted focus group discussions in Ghana and Zambia to gather information around attitudes and beliefs about abortion. A 57-item instrument was created from this data, pre-tested, and then administered to 531 individuals (n=250 in Ghana and n=281 in Zambia). Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on 33 of the original 57 items to identify a statistically and conceptually relevant scale. Items with factor loadings >0.39 were retained. All analyses were completed using Stata IC/11.2.

Exploratory factor analysis resulted in a 3-factor solution that explained 53 percent of the variance in

an 18-item instrument. The three identified subscales are:

- Negative stereotypes (8 items)
- Discrimination and exclusion (7 items)
- Potential contagion (3 items)

Coefficient alphas of 0.85, 0.80 and 0.80 for the three subscales, and 0.90 for the full 18-item instrument provide evidence of internal consistency reliability. Further testing of SABAS is ongoing in Uganda, Kenya and Mexico.

SABAS Scoring

The response categories for SABAS are set up on a Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with each response being assigned a value ranging from 1-5. SABAS is easy to score and can be scored in four different ways: total score, negative stereotyping subscale, exclusion and discrimination subscale, and fear of contagion subscale. (Please note that item 15, used in both the total score and the exclusion and discrimination subscale, should be reverse coded so that a higher score reflects a more stigmatizing attitude, i.e. strongly disagree=5, disagree=4, unsure=3, agree=2 and strongly agree=1.)

Regardless of whether you are looking at the total SABAS score or the score of individual sub-scales, a higher score represents more stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs about women who have an abortion. There are no predetermined cutoffs or thresholds for what represents stigma. We encourage users to use the scores as continuous variables or to create cutoffs that are appropriate to your context or setting.

Shellenberg, KM, Levandowski, B., Hessini, L. (2014). “Developing a scale to measure stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs about women who have abortions: Results from Ghana and Zambia.” *Women & Health*. Vol. 54, Issue 7, Pages 599-616.

For questions or more information about SABAS, please contact Kristen Shellenberg, Research and Evaluation Senior Associate, North Carolina, shellenbergk@ipas.org.

The full SABAS questionnaire is comprised of all 18 items listed below.

SABAS Sub-scale items:

Negative stereotyping SABAS items

Item	Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	A woman who has an abortion is committing a sin.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Once a woman has one abortion, she will make it a habit.	1	2	3	4	5
3	A woman who has had an abortion cannot be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5
4	A woman who has an abortion brings shame to her family.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The health of a woman who has an abortion is never as good as it was before the abortion.	1	2	3	4	5
6	A woman who has had an abortion might encourage other women to get abortions.	1	2	3	4	5
7	A woman who has an abortion is a bad mother.	1	2	3	4	5
8	A woman who has an abortion brings shame to her community.	1	2	3	4	5

Exclusion and discrimination SABAS items

Item	Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	A woman who has had an abortion should be prohibited from going to religious services.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I would tease a woman who has had an abortion so that she will be ashamed about her decision.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I would try to disgrace a woman in my community if I found out she'd had an abortion.	1	2	3	4	5
12	A man should not marry a woman who has had an abortion because she may not be able to bear children.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I would stop being friends with someone if I found out that she had an abortion.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I would point my fingers at a woman who had an abortion so that other people would know what she has done.	1	2	3	4	5
15	A woman who has an abortion should be treated the same as everyone else.	1	2	3	4	5

Fear of contagion SABAS items

Item	Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	A woman who has an abortion can make other people fall ill or get sick.	1	2	3	4	5
17	A woman who has an abortion should be isolated from other people in the community for at least 1 month after having an abortion.	1	2	3	4	5
18	If a man has sex with a woman who has had an abortion, he will become infected with a disease.	1	2	3	4	5